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JEREMIAH—THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

Jeremiah was a native of Anathoth, a village of Benjamin some three miles north-east of Jerusalem. His father Hilkiyah was a priest, belonging in all probability to the family of Abiathar, who, on being deposed from the high-priesthood by Solomon, had been condemned to retirement within his "own fields" in Anathoth.¹ Jeremiah, accordingly, would have inherited the traditions of an illustrious ancestry, and his early life would have been moulded by the distinctive religious influences of the community to which he belonged. God however had "provided some better thing" for him than to spend his days in serving at the altars of a proscribed and degenerate priesthood. The young son of Hilkiyah had been appointed to the tremendous destiny of being a prophet of the Lord in one of the most testing hours in the history of His chosen people.

It was in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, that is, in the year 627 B.C., that Jeremiah received his call to the prophetic office. His ministry extended through the disastrous years which culminated in the tragedy of the Exile, and after that was continued in Egypt, we know not how long. Altogether it lasted for at least well over forty years. While lacking to some extent in the overwhelming splendour which marks the inaugural vision of Isaiah or of Ezekiel, the circumstances of his call have an impressiveness which strikes an even deeper note. Several of these circumstances are so charged with meaning that a true conception of their significance is essential to a right understanding of the prophet's subsequent history.

¹ 1 Kings, ii. 26.

MONARCHY IN ISRAEL: THE IDEAL AND THE ACTUAL*

To the fathers of the people of Israel, Abraham and Jacob, was given a divine promise of perpetual blessing which included, among other details, this detail: "kings shall come out of thee."¹ To whatever date these ancient records of a still more ancient promise may be assigned by criticism, they show that men of Israel saw in monarchy itself nothing incongruous with Israel's national prerogative.

The narrative of how in accordance with that promise Israel first came to have a king, is contained in the First Book of Samuel, chapters eight to twelve. As this narrative lies before us the momentous step is described in its several stages.

First, the way is prepared for the step by allusion to Samuel's increasing age and his sons' moral unfitness for leadership.² Next, a colloquy is reported between Samuel and the elders of the nation at the prophet's home in Ramah: they ask him for the institution of monarchy to remedy the present want of leadership, especially in view of the custom prevailing in surrounding nations. At God's bidding Samuel deprecates their petition, associates it with their own lack of loyalty to Jehovah, points out at length the drawbacks of monarchy in actual operation, yet gives assent in principle.³ The next turn of the story reports the remarkable way in which Samuel's eyes were first providentially directed toward Saul, the son of Kish, the private preparation and anointing for sovereignty which Saul received at the prophet's hands, and Saul's personal reaction to this astounding prospect.⁴ Then follows the assembly of the people at Mizpah, summoned by Samuel, at which Saul is publicly designated,

* The substance of this article was delivered in Miller Chapel, October 11 and 14, 1921, as the second and fifth lectures on "The House of David," constituting the Stone Lectures for the year 1921-2.

¹ Gen. xvii. 6; xxxv. 11. Comp. xvii. 16; xxxvi. 31.

² 1 Sam. viii. 1-3.

³ *Ibid.*, 4-22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ix. 1-x. 16.

anointed, and saluted as king: whereupon he resumes his private life, amid a wide divergence of popular judgment as to his fitness for the royal office.⁵ How Saul uses a crisis with Ammon to unite Israel under his leadership, is the part of the narrative which occupies the next—the eleventh—chapter, and it is altogether fitting that at its close popular approbation of the new king because of his initial success should take, as it does, the double aspect of wrath against those who had maligned him and a renewed oath of allegiance to a king who had now proved his worth.⁶ The last part of the story presents Samuel's public *apologia pro vita sua*, and his personal appeal to the nation to remain loyal to Jehovah under this new monarchical constitution, lest it prove to be in fact, as in appearance, rejection of Jehovah's sovereignty.⁷

This section as a whole, just as it has come down to us, is thus not obviously composite. Its subject-matter, at least, does not afford *prima facie* evidence of divergent documents. It does not cry aloud for analysis in order to a rational understanding of it. It is true, there are mingled here favorable and unfavorable judgments of monarchy as an institution in Israel. But who can deny that this double point of view is actually inherent in the historical situation? The tediously uniform solvent of the dominant critical school is literary analysis. Here, as in every other case where there is a hint of divergent views, or even where a difference can be made to appear through the process of analysis itself, documents with diverse "tendencies"—because supposedly issuing from different circles or periods—are discovered, and their present unity is ascribed to the harmonizing efforts of a subsequent redactor. And here, as in other cases, one is constrained to ask, If the harmony admittedly achieved by this redactor is a real unity, which could satisfy not only himself but his readers from that day to this, why may not that harmony have lain from the first in the facts themselves and a true report of them?

In this particular case that query is notably pertinent, be-

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. xi.

⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. xii.

cause it is impossible to think of monarchy in Israel without a double significance. Israel's relations to God and to the world are both ideal and actual. Ideally, Israel is God's peculiar people, the agent of His purposes of grace for the world. Actually, Israel is a sinful, rebellious nation, quite ready to enjoy all the benefits of its peculiar relation to God, but equally ready to disown God's rights to its undivided allegiance and service. Isaiah's parable of Jehovah and His vineyard affords an incomparable picture of the two Israels:⁸ the choice vine, with its noble grapes expected, and with the wildlings which the owner found—"he looked for justice (*mishpat*), but, behold, oppression (*mispach*); for righteousness (*tsedhaqah*), but, behold, a cry (*tse'aqah*)."

All the institutions of Israel are framed with a view to this double-sidedness: the ideal, and the actual. And by no means least, its form of government is susceptible of both an ideal and a practical constitution.

Ideally, Israel was a theocracy. The principle is nowhere better stated than in Isaiah xxxiii. 22, "Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us." If this ideal point of view could be thus maintained and expressed centuries after there had been human kings ruling in Israel, who dare profess surprise at its presence in an historical document which purports to give the attitude of Samuel, one of the greatest of Israel's prophet-statesmen, before the human monarchy had been set up?

On the other hand, all the burden of the story in the Books of Judges and First Samuel is Israel's desperate situation in its kingless days. And the institution of monarchy is necessarily a measure that belongs to the empirical side of statesmanship. Because Israel faced "a condition, not a theory" in the troublous days of Philistine and Ammonite oppression, therefore, and not because of any alteration in fundamental religious or political principles, was a king over the Hebrew tribes demanded and created. Surely the man Samuel, who according to all tradition did this practical thing, may be held

⁸ Is. v. 1-7.

to have himself shared the practical viewpoint of the monarchy.

Apart from all literary questions, therefore, one cannot approach the section of Samuel which tells the story of Saul's elevation, without expecting to find in this transitional time a dual attitude toward the monarchy in Israel. And when these five chapters of Samuel are scanned with this thought in view, they will be found by any unprejudiced reader to contain just that blending of hope and fear, of regret and enthusiasm, which real men of flesh and blood might be expected to show under such circumstances.

A typical representative of the water-tight-compartment criticism is Budde, who says of this matter: "God contradicts himself. For he here declares the transition to monarchy to be revolt and sin, while there he himself introduces it."⁹ This shallow dictum should be contrasted with the thoughtful summary which Wilke gives of the same matter. Wilke writes:

The prophets' political activity can appear contradictory and often incomprehensible, if one confines himself merely to the consideration of external events. But their attitude appears unitary, conscious of its goal, and psychologically intelligible, if one looks for the historical circumstances and the inner impulses of their conduct. . . . Samuel recognized the necessity for this reform in the constitution and carried it out with a sure hand. True, Samuel seems to have resolved upon this important step only after long hesitation and repeated debate with Jehovah. And as a matter of fact this alteration of the constitution meant a radical break with the past, in which Jehovah had formed His nation without monarchy and without monarchy had led it on to victory and fame. The far-sighted seer had even thought out well in advance the important social and political consequences of this innovation: a royal establishment makes burdensome taxes necessary; the crown-domain, which the ruler must needs possess in order to be independent of influential families and parties, demands all sorts of services, numerous undertakings and government officials; and the possession of war-horses and chariots—the dreaded cavalry of antiquity—leads to the rise of a privileged and professional warrior caste. Besides, the sad experience they had undergone with the tyranny of Abimelech in Shechem in the time of the Judges was certainly not forgotten. Nevertheless, in the end the unendurable yoke of foreign domination silenced all scruples. The ark—that ancient means for

⁹ Budde, *Die Schätzung des Königthums im Alten Testament: eine Kaisersgeburtstagsrede*. Marburg, 1903. P. 14.

unifying the tribes—was in the enemy's land. The hand of the Philistines rested heavily on the country—so heavily that not even were smiths permitted in Israel. And the way other neighboring peoples could at that time treat the people of Jehovah appears clearly from the disgraceful proposal which a ruler of Ammon dared to make to the Israelitish city of Jabesh in Gilead: he would make a covenant with the citizens, if they would all have their right eyes put out. But complete loss of national independence would necessarily bring about the death of the religion of Jehovah also, under the conditions of those times. The gathering together of all the nation's forces, therefore, about a new means of unification, was under such circumstances nothing less than a life-and-death matter for Israel. And it was thus that the glance of Samuel, who in his youth had already become acquainted with the Israelites' troubles on the occasions of their concourse as pilgrims at the shrine of Shiloh, and had since borne them on his praying heart, was directed toward an institution to which foreigners owed a great share of their success—to monarchy. A king, called from among the people by Jehovah, could summon to the colors the discouraged, divided tribes, to fight for the freedom of their country and their religious heritage, and could permanently master the centrifugal forces. Saul's elevation as king over Israel was thus a political act of the first magnitude, which the "Old Master" of prophecy carried out advisedly.¹⁰

Embedded in the Deuteronomic Law is a view of the monarchy as an institution in Israel, which rather gains than loses in significance if it is held—as critics commonly hold it—to date from the later monarchical period.¹¹ The main features of the king here sanctioned by the Law are the following: (1) though elected by the people, he is to be selected by Jehovah; (2) he must be an Israelite; (3) he is forbidden three specific things—the commonest objects of royal cupidity always and everywhere—a great stable,¹² a great harem, and a great treasury; and (4) he is required to write, read, and observe the commandments of Jehovah as contained in the Law.

Not alone from these main features, however, but also from the nuances with which the royal portrait is shaded, we receive the same double impression of the monarchy here as

¹⁰ Wilke, *Die politische Wirksamkeit der Propheten Israels*. Leipzig, 1913. Pp. 91, 10-12.

¹¹ Deut. xvii. 14-20.

¹² Or, rather, in view of such passages as Is. xxxi. 1, a great force of cavalry or chariots, constituting a royal bodyguard and the nucleus of a standing army. Comp. 1 Sam. viii. 11f; 1 Kings xi. 26, 28f.

we receive in the First Book of Samuel. On the one hand the rule of this human king is a human substitute for the ideal rule of Jehovah in Israel. Note these turns of expression: "When thou shalt say, *I* will set a king over *me*" (not, be it observed, "When Jehovah shall set a king over thee");¹³ "that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren"—he is prone to pride;¹⁴ "that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left"—he is prone to disobedience;¹⁵ "that his heart turn not away"—he is prone to apostasy.¹⁶ Yet on the other hand, this king is chosen of God: "Thou shalt surely set him king over thee, whom Jehovah thy God shall choose."¹⁷ He thus enjoys that divine prerogative which reigning houses have sought as the basis for their thrones from Egyptian Pharaohs to Prussian Hohenzollerns. And he is to have indefinite continuance of his own and his children's regal sway, as long as he binds up his own cause with Jehovah's in Israel by conforming to those statutes of Jehovah which are as definitely "with him"¹⁸ (that is, in his hands, his keeping) as they are in the hands of the priests of the sanctuary.

It is "the Lord's Anointed" (*Messiah*), with a conditional immortality for his house, and a standing in Israel correlative with priest and prophet as measured by "divine right," who meets us in these verses of Deuteronomy. If Deuteronomy is of Mosaic origin, as it purports to be, then of course its pronouncement upon monarchy was normative for such a person as Samuel and for all the true prophets of Jehovah who came after him. But if Deuteronomy is a product of the seventh century B.C., even then it shows that to the best minds of that century in Judah the monarchy in retrospect meant *the same* mingling of practical value and necessity with principal surrender or accommodation, as it meant to the author of the Books of Samuel, and, if he reports truly, to Samuel himself.

What then of that body of opinion about the monarchy

¹³ Deut. xvii. 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ver. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ver. 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ver. 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ver. 19.

which can be positively dated subsequently to Samuel? Schematizers like Budde have worked out a theory of the approval and disapproval of monarchy in Israel, with Hosea as the turning-point. Such sharp opposition to it as we find before Hosea's time—for example, from Elijah—is not interpreted by Budde as opposition to monarchy as such: "they merely substituted one house for another."¹⁹ But Hosea, whose profound mysticism conceived the relation between Jehovah and Israel under the figure of a marriage, could not, we are told, tolerate the notion of any other lord's coming between Israel and her divine Husband. Moreover, according to Budde, a profound pessimism gripped Hosea, as he looked forth upon the Israel of his day, doomed to disaster by the Assyrian menace from without and by utter corruption and dissolution within. "Beneath the pressure of such prospects," he says, "there disappears from the best souls all national spirit, all reliance on powers resident in the people, and there is formed a religious idealism which can build only on God and seeks help only from Him."²⁰ It is thus, we are informed, that Hosea is led to reject the monarchy as not merely of human invention but atheistic in conception and principle: "They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not."²¹ "Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath."²² According to some, Hosea's indictment, "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah,"²³ means that the starting-point of Israel's apostasy was when Saul of Gibeah was elevated to the kingship.

But, like other schemes elaborated by modern critics of the Old Testament, this scheme is built upon the following arbitrary method: first, a selection from among all the facts, followed, second, by the rejection of whatever contradicts the deductions drawn from those selected facts. In reality,

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

²¹ Hos. viii. 4.

²² Hos. xiii. 10f.

²³ Hos. x. 9, comp. ix. 9.

Hosea reveals precisely the same double attitude towards the monarchy as do his predecessors and his successors. Not only does Hosea permit us to see that for the people themselves the loss of their king would be regarded as a punishment for their unfaithfulness, but he classes the monarchy with other valuable possessions cherished by Israel, which God will withdraw from His people temporarily but restore to them in brighter days beyond. If Hosea held the view attributed to him by Budde, he would rather see in this anticipated setting aside of the kingship a gleam of hope.

It is hardly necessary to examine further in detail a scheme which thus breaks down at its chosen turning-point. Like Samuel himself, all the writers, both early and late, have a latent sense of Jehovah's fundamental sovereignty, which becomes patent whenever the contrast between the empirical monarchy in Israel and Jehovah's ideal sway comes to expression. And yet they all have at the same time a practical and patriotic view of the human institution of monarchy, which leads them to uphold and co-operate with their king, just as long as that king's own conduct and policy do not compel every far-sighted and religiously-minded patriot to oppose him. Or, looked at from the side of restraint rather than of constraint, respect for the king as visible head of a divinely sanctioned political organization restrains the articulate among them from open rebellion, even under great provocation; while on the other hand, their consciousness of God's majesty as the fountain of the king's derived majesty restrains them from that exaggerated reverence which in other ancient nations often passed the bounds of adulation and became adoration.²⁴

What now of the relation of the monarch in Israel to his people, as exhibited in the practical exercise of his royal functions? To what type of monarchy did the Hebrew monarchy belong?

²⁴ See in particular the monograph of C. Jeremias, *Die Vergöttlichung der babylonisch-assyrischen Könige*, in *DER ALTE ORIENT* for 1919, Leipzig, Jahrgang 19, Heft 3-4.

The attempt has been made to represent Israel's king as the head of a highly democratic, constitutional state, and herein to contrast him with the general type of ancient oriental kings, who were admittedly absolute monarchs.

The late Professor Kent, in an article bearing the rather pretentious title, "The Birth of Democracy,"²⁵ has perhaps gone further than anyone else in developing this view. He says: "In theory and in practice the head of an ancient Semitic tribe was not the master but the servant of the people, and each man shared the responsibilities as well as the rights that went with this thoroughly democratic type of organization." Of the Hebrew tribes, as particular exemplifications of this political system, he writes: "Opposition and struggle with the autocratic systems of government already established in Palestine only intensified the devotion of the Hebrews to their inherited ideals." Relying upon a more or less plausible derivation of the Hebrew word for king, *melek*, from a root meaning to advise, to counsel, Kent asserts: "By virtue of their title, as well as in fact, Gideon, Saul, David, and their successors were simply the chief counsellors of the united tribes. Their functions and authority were practically identical with those of the tribal sheikh, only these served a larger and more stable social group. Their method of election was more direct and democratic than that followed today in electing the President of the United States. Their tenure of office resembled more closely that of the present head of the British democracy, although it was not so firmly established."

As illustrations of these and similar assertions, the writer instances Saul's fear of David's prowess and popularity, the ratification of Solomon's nomination by the people, Rehoboam's rejection by the bulk of the nation, the overruling of Saul's sentence of death upon Jonathan by the popular will, the temporary success of Absalom's revolt because of popular support gained through his assumed democratic bearing, and even Naboth's trial before his own townsfolk, in which King

²⁵ In the YALE REVIEW for October, 1919, pp. 131-142.

Ahab was compelled to force a miscarriage of justice in order to satisfy a royal whim.

Professor Kent sees in the prophets of Israel the great protagonists of democracy, as they became the champions of a nation devoted to the maintenance of their democratic institutions and constantly menaced with the loss of them. The foes of autocracy—Moses, Deborah, Samuel, Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah—these were the great national heroes. "There is not a decade," he writes, "from 1200 to 600 B.C., when the contest between the ideals of Hebrew democracy and those of oriental despotism was not being hotly waged. . . . To maintain them the Hebrews sacrificed internal peace and in the end their national life."

There is truth in all this. Every friend of democracy and of the Bible will gladly recognize, with Professor Kent, the intimate historical association of the two as respectively effect and cause. Yet it would be a mistake to look so exclusively on one side of the Hebrew monarchy as to be unable to see the other side also.

At the time the monarchy was introduced into Israel the people themselves and Samuel their leader were quite conscious that they were introducing a novelty into Israel's political constitution. The experiment of Abimelech, son of Gideon, who was as willing to be called "king" as his father had been unwilling, was local, brief, and highly unsatisfactory.²⁶ His relation to Shechem was of the same class with the local kingships prevailing in the Canaanitish city-states. Saul, not Abimelech, was the first King of Israel. It is therefore hazardous at the outset to equate, as Kent does, a Hebrew king and an Arab sheikh. Leaders, in peace and in war, Israel always had. The king was a specific kind of leader. That general atmosphere of democracy in Israel, which Kent and others have so admirably pointed out, affected the nature of its kingship no less than that of its other institutions. But this is far from justifying the representation of the men who ruled at Jerusalem and Samaria as a succession of Presi-

²⁶ Judg. ix.

dents and Premiers. Kent's admission that Solomon and Ahab were tyrants appears to carry with it the assumption that the other two-score kings were not tyrants. But it would be a bold historian who ventured to assert that Ahab's rule was any more of a tyranny than that of Omri or Jehu, or Solomon's rule more so than that of Manasseh or Jehoiakim. Furthermore, to represent the political events that are associated with the names of Jeroboam and Jehu as merely a democratic reaction against autocracy is to ignore most of the historical background of both events.

Professor McCurdy has presented this matter in a better, because a more diffused, light, where he writes:²⁷ "In practice as in theory the king was always absolute. . . . No higher conceptions of a good king have ever been given to the world than those which are presented in the proverbial Wisdom of the Hebrews. But no constitutional obligations were laid upon any one of the rulers, nor any restriction put upon his arbitrary authority. Whether they could be most fairly symbolized by the olive, the fig, the vine, or the bramble of Jotham's famous parable, their good or their bad conduct alike was the expression of their own sweet will." Thus while we have mentioned Manasseh and Jehoiakim as illustrations of absolute sovereignty in seventh-century Jerusalem, there is little reason to suppose that their evil reigns were a whit more arbitrary than the good reign of Josiah, which lay between them, and which witnessed the imposition of the famous covenant upon the people *from above*—by royal will.²⁸

Selfish despotism was the persistent tendency of monarchy in Israel. Even in the reign of a David it is illustrated by the matter of Uriah the Hittite.²⁹ Yet it is already admirably depicted in advance by Samuel, in his sketch of "the manner of the king" in First Samuel, chapter eight.

What then was there in Israel, it may be asked, to mitigate the despotism of such an autocratic institution?

²⁷ McCurdy, *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, New York, 1896. Vol. II, p. 163.

²⁸ 2 Kings xxiii. 1-3, 21, etc.

²⁹ 2 Sam. xi.

Primarily, there was the "duty of deference to Jehovah as His vicegerents and servants; . . . the sphere of religion formed an exception to the rule that the king did not brook control or even seek for counsel. . . . Jehovah is above the king, and the prophet who communicates the oracles is by the nature of the case superior in his own proper sphere."³⁰ Those "heroes of the nation"—the prophets whom Kent represents as spokesmen for democracy—what were they but the spokesmen for Jehovah? Is it in the name of an outraged people that we find them apostrophizing Saul, David, Solomon, Ahab? By no means. They come to these monarchs in the name of a forgotten or defied Deity, to whom they owe their throne, and over whose people they rule simply as vicegerents. The first fifteen verses of the twelfth chapter of Second Samuel—Nathan's interview with David after his sin with Bathsheba—brief as it is, is as instructive as any passage in the "latter prophets" for the understanding of the following relationships: the mutual relations of God and the king, of God and the prophet, of king and prophet, of God and the people, and of king and people.

But besides this major curb on autocracy—the religious curb—there were minor curbs also. There were the local magistrates and rulers, with whom the people came into a direct contact such as they rarely had with the king. The story of Naboth, while it shows the exceptional power of a tyrant to override the humbler powers of the "elders and nobles" of a community, proves also that, under ordinary circumstances, the life of the common citizen was more immediately affected by the good will and good character (or the reverse) of these his neighbors, than by the king and court.³¹ And finally there was also the curb of custom and convention—a power which in the East far more than in the West, in antiquity far more than today, prescribes limits to personal power and individual whim. "It is not so done in Israel"—and similar formulae that meet us frequently on the pages of

³⁰ McCurdy, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

³¹ I Kings xxi. 1-16.

the Old Testament³²—must have served often and again to hold back even a wilful prince from some folly or tyranny.

Yet after all subtraction has been made for these mitigations, and after we have freely granted that “the Hebrew monarchy was the only one of the Semitic communities which realized anything like the true idea of a nation,” and that “the Hebrews . . . were the most independent and democratic of all the Semites,” it still remains true that in Israel as elsewhere “unchecked power tends to make men despots and unlimited opportunity to make them unscrupulous.”³³ And whenever we feel tempted to wonder at the frequency with which the sacred historian records as his verdict on the moral quality of a particular king, “He did evil in the sight of Jehovah,” we need also to weigh these true words of Professor McCurdy: “Perhaps the wonderful thing, after all, is not that the evil kings of Israel and Judah should have been so numerous, but that there should have been any kings at all of a high and noble type.”³⁴

What is “the Messianic idea”? Perhaps no answer to this question has been more carefully framed than this one by the late Professor von Orelli of Basel: “The Davidic king stands in the most immediate relation to Jehovah, who is properly King of this people in virtue of His covenant. Chosen and constituted by the Lord, he represents to the nation—indeed, to the world—the almighty, sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. But at the same time there comes to culmination in his person the calling of that holy nation which was to be at once God’s servant and God’s son. Thus the Davidic king represents his people in priestly fashion towards the Lord. The national form of the covenant-idea assumes here the personal form, yet without surrender of the thought of God’s

³² 2 Sam. xiii. 12. Comp. Gen. xxix. 26; and see Köberle, *Sünde und Gnade*, München, 1905, p. 38.

³³ McCurdy, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

national commonwealth, for the person thus intimately bound up with God is the national king, the mediator between God and His people."³⁵

After what we have already discovered in the fundamental character of this Messianic idea, 2 Sam. vii.,³⁶ and what we have further seen reflected from it in the literary documents of Israel's spokesmen,³⁷ we need spend no time now in verifying the correctness of the above statement: it is merely an orderly induction from the facts of Scripture. But the further question remains to be answered: was this merely an idea, with a literary expression, indeed, yet with nothing in the sphere of reality to correspond to it? Or do we find in the record of historical facts and figures that the idea incorporated itself in human life? Was *this* "word" "made flesh"? When, how, and in whom did the covenant-promise of God fulfil itself?

In asking this question we are by no means passing beyond the limits of Biblical warrant. For, in the first place, the God of the Bible is the God of life, whose decree eventuates in act and fact: the God of revelation, to be sure, yet the God of redemption also, whose revelation is only intended to prepare for, accompany, and interpret His redemptive process. And, in the second place, later revelation looks back, not merely to earlier revelation, as for example we have seen an Isaiah looking back to a Nathan; but it looks back also on the course of history in connection with that earlier revelation, and finds in the former the fulfilment of the latter. So, for example, Zechariah begins his prophetic ministry (Zech. i. 6).

That term "fulfilment" is not, indeed, the commonest expression for this idea in the Old Testament, as it has become in the New. Rather, the Old Testament writers prefer to speak of a "setting up" or "raising up," a "coming in" or

³⁵ C. von Orelli, *ATliche Weissagung von der Vollendung des Gottesreichs*, Vienna, 1882. P. 188. Eng. trans. by Banks, Edinburgh, 1885. P. 168.

³⁶ See art. "The Davidic Covenant" in this REVIEW for July, 1927.

³⁷ See art. "Echoes of the Covenant" in this REVIEW for October, 1927.

“bringing in,” or a “doing” of the earlier word. Yet the figure of “filling up,” “completing,” through the actualization of what, as spoken or written word, was previously incomplete or empty, is not unknown even to the Old Testament. And we may the more appropriately use the term “fulfilment” in connection with “the sure mercies of David,” because we find the two expressions combined in the Bible itself. Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer says: “Yea, thou spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day.”³⁸ Here “fulfilled” is the word meaning literally “filled up,” “completed,” like the corresponding Greek word of the New Testament; while the contrast of “mouth” and “hand” shows that the author of Kings conceived Solomon as having in mind precisely those two phases of the divine self-expression which we have just contrasted—speech and action—the latter as the “fulfilment” of the former.

To return then to our question: When, how, and in whom did God’s covenant with David concerning his house fulfil itself?

The promise was to a collective unit. The “seed” or “house” of a man meant the body of his posterity, which of course would vary in numbers with the passage of time and the alteration of circumstance. The analogy with the seed of Abraham is instructive. This consisted for a time of Ishmael only—when he was cast out, of Isaac only. As the family broadened out rapidly with each passing generation after Jacob’s, so Abraham’s seed grew in the total of individuals included in it, yet remained still a unit, collectively heir to the covenant-promise to Abraham its father. So with David’s seed. In the next generation Solomon and his brothers were the heir of the promise through Nathan. Solomon himself was the specific individual, singled out in ver. 13 of Nathan’s oracle, who should build the Temple; and, accordingly, he sees in his completion of the Temple the “fulfilment” of that part of

³⁸ 1 Kings viii. 15.

the oracle.³⁹ Yet Solomon did not mean to claim that the whole content of the promise was "fulfilled" in him, at least in that one act of his career. The further fact that he was sitting on the throne of Israel, instead of suffering the fate of Jonathan, the worthy son of rejected Saul, was in his mind a fulfilment of the promise.⁴⁰ Yet was not the promise *filled full* thereby: "for ever"—thus, with the utmost insistence, ran the terms of the promise—"for ever shall thy seed sit on the throne of Israel."

Did any of these kings expect to live for ever? Did the most ardent of their admiring, loyal subjects, the most extravagant of their court-poets, mean literally that Solomon, or Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah, or Josiah, would live for ever, when they applied this customary phrase to them in address or in affirmation? We cannot think so. Those kings must have been apprehended, and have apprehended themselves, as links in a chain of succession, such as we see historically realized in the dynastic list of Jerusalem's sovereigns through four centuries. In each of them David lived on, or rather, the heir of David lived, to whom the promise was made. Yet all together constituted that "seed" of David, which was the subject of all save the individualized, limited portion of Nathan's oracle.

In that oracle, besides the individualization of Solomon as the Temple-builder (2 Sam. vii. 13), there is the hypothetical individualization implied in the tempered warning of ver. 14. "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men." We term this a "tempered" warning, because the "rod of men" and its parallel phrase can only mean such a rod as *men* use for chastisement—not an overwhelming, annihilating "rod of God," which no man could endure. Thus the whole sentence

³⁹ "In general one should remember, as Hengstenberg and Keil remark, that the erection of the Temple likewise waited till Christ for its fulfilment and thus belonged to the task assigned to David's seed lasting beyond the O.T. history, John ii. 19." Orelli, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁴⁰ 1 Kings viii. 20.

is in harmony with what precedes and what follows it. Preceding it is the gracious promise, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." And following it is the further promise, "My loving-kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee." So this "rod of men" is after all a *father's* rod for a *son*, whom he will chasten to amend, not smite to destroy.

What then of the fulfilment of this hypothetical individualization? Did David's seed, collectively considered, yet of course in its concrete individual manifestations, "commit iniquity," and did God "fulfil" His promise under these circumstances? Here again we possess Scriptural interpretation of the fulfilment as well as of the intent of the covenant. When the ten tribes were rent away from the Davidic house in the person of Rehoboam, we are told that the one tribe, Judah, was left to David (!) because of that covenant-promise. For the iniquity of Solomon and of his son who followed in his evil ways God chastised the seed of David by the forfeiture of most of the power, dignity, and opportunity conferred in the prophecy of Nathan. Yet God chastised with "the rod of men," in that He did not make an end of the sinners, but left "a lamp" for David in Jerusalem.⁴¹ Thus we are expressly instructed to regard the diminished scope of the Davidic heritage throughout the centuries of divided monarchy, as a fulfilment of *both* the warning and the promise contained in 2 Sam. vii. 14.

This prepares us to view from the right angle that situation which began with the year 587 B.C. With the Exile the beginning of a new era must be recognized, not only for the House of Israel, but also for the House of David. The prophets who were appointed to announce that Exile as a work wrought by Jehovah, had also to interpret its meaning and relation to Jehovah's covenant with His people. In Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii., for instance, the culminating stroke in the series of chastisements wherewith Jehovah will punish the apostasy of Israel is their banishment from the land of

⁴¹ 1 Kings xi. 36; 2 Kings viii. 19.

promise, their captivity to alien peoples, and their forfeiture of those privileges to which the covenant with Jehovah had previously entitled them. Now if these two chapters date, as they purport to date, from the Mosaic age, and forecast the future of a nation with its whole record still to write for good or ill, then they merely anticipate the words of the prophets—an Amos in the North, a Jeremiah in the South—who had to specify and apply the principal program of the Law. But even if those chapters date, as current critical views commonly hold, from the latter part of the 7th century B.C., being parts of the "Holiness Code" and of the "Deuteronomistic Supplements" to the Book of Deuteronomy respectively, still they reflect the contemporaneous views of prophecy and sum them up in a formal, schematic expression. In any case, there is no doubt that Israel's dark experience of exile was thoroughly interpreted to it, before, during, and after the experience itself. And never is it represented as a termination, or even violation, of the covenant between God and Israel. It is punitive, corrective, temporary: a suspension, not a dissolution.

Similarly, that Exile was to the House of David the culmination of a series of divine measures, punitive, corrective, temporary, designed to prepare the collective unit which experienced them for a better, broader fulfilment thereafter of the terms of the ancient covenant. In this case too we have a document that purports to lay down in advance the formal principles of this chastisement. In what we have called the "hypothetical individualization" of 2 Sam. vii. 14, we have the special treatment described which would be accorded David's seed *if* it proved faithless as a son to its father's commands, disloyal to its own covenant-duties. All the trend of our former inquiry about the age and influence of this document leads to the conviction, that it really preceded the defection which it anticipates as possible in view of Saul's defection. Yet here too, even if it were a product of the 7th century, the meaning would not be altered. Its author would then be interpreting, for the House of David in his own day

and thereafter, the connection between God's dealings with individual representatives of this house and their own degree of fidelity to God's requirements of His vicegerent, His "servant," His "son."

The fact that for only a brief period the dominion of the House of David remained a dominion over all Israel and so realized historically the ideal sovereignty contemplated in the covenant, and that it was thereafter limited to dominion over Judah alone—this fact is expressly pointed out as a fulfilment of the threatened chastisement. When the dynasty finally fell, and David's "lamp in Jerusalem" was extinguished, it must have seemed to many at the time as if God had annulled His covenant. Men said one to another, we know: "The breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of Jehovah, was taken in their pits; of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the nations."⁴² Yet voices were raised to interpret even this supreme tragedy as merely the culmination of that chastisement which had been threatened in the Davidic covenant. It was indeed different in degree from what had gone before, but not in kind. That long phase of obscurity,⁴³ which stretches from Jehoiachin onward through centuries, was no more an annulment of the Davidic covenant than the Exile was an annulment of the covenant with Abraham and Jacob. Just as a backsliding people had to leave its land till that land had "enjoyed its sabbaths," (as the prophets picturesquely expressed it), although that land had been promised to the seed of Abraham for ever, so it must for many days continue without king and without prince, until that "afterward"—those "latter days"—when Jehovah should restore to them the supreme blessing of His own rule in the seed of David.

It is this phase of obscurity which historically separates the ultimate individualized "Son of David" from the partial fulfilment of Nathan's oracle in the dynastic line of Judah. It is analogous to the ecclesiastical Judaism of the post-

⁴² Lam. iv. 20.

⁴³ See art. "The Davidic Dynasty" in this REVIEW for April, 1927.

exilic period, which historically separates the universal community of Christians from the ancient nation of Israel. It should never be lost sight of, that these two things belong together and move in agreement: sovereign, and subjects; or, the kingdom viewed as a personal status and function of the king, and the kingdom viewed as a sphere of human relations and operations. They are two sides of the same thing.

By means of this providential historical development there gradually came to be projected upon, and so detached from, the collective seed of David, more and more clearly to prophetic vision and in popular expectation, the Figure of an Individual, in whom the covenant with David should find its complete realization, its ideal fulfilment. The firm historical basis for this Figure of the future lay in the past: he was to be the Heir, and a heritage is always from and of the past. As a son of David, what he should inherit through the covenant would be just this: "the sure mercies of David." As such he is often directly called "David." Much of the prophetic description of his status and functions roots in the experiences of the historical David. Yet more and more this anticipation outgrows the past. Just as imagination uses the images of memory, yet revises, combines, heightens and brightens them with the magic touch of poet and artist, so the elements furnished to the psalmists and rhapsodists of Israel by the historical records of David's person, prestige, power, and achievements, proved inadequate to clothe their image of the Coming One.⁴⁴ The prophets transcended even an idealized David, and this "Branch" of David's line grew into a new and distinct Personality. "The Lord's Anointed" *par excellence*—the Messiah, the Christ—became the Center about whose Person the characteristically forward-looking glance of the Old Testament Church envisaged the glories of "the latter days."

⁴⁴ One can feel the strain of the poetic imagination in Psalm cx., for example, as the Subject transcends the elements out of which the imagery must be constructed. Hence much of the exegetical difficulty, as also in the case of 2 Sam. xxiii.

Such now we discover to have been the *ideal* and the *actual*, as monarchy ran its course in Israel from its earliest intimations in Mosaic and even Patriarchal times down to a prophecy which outlived the line of Hebrew kings and still faced forward with hope. One puzzle remains to be solved: what relation did the ideal king envisaged in "the Messianic idea" bear to that ideal kingship cherished, as we have seen, by Samuel and all the prophets as the prerogative of Jehovah Himself?

To solve this problem we should be led out into the broad field of Israel's eschatology, its nature, age, and source. It must suffice here to refer to a study of this subject which was published in this REVIEW for October, 1913, under the title, "The Source of Israel's Eschatology." From the third section of that article, which deals with the Eschatology of a Saviour, we quote (in substance) the following paragraphs. (We presuppose the main result of our inquiry there, viz., Jehovah's vindication of His kingship in His "Day" by a *coming* to His people to judge and to save.)

What are we to make of a figure such as the Messianic idea of the prophets and psalmists exhibits to us, alongside of that figure of the expected Jehovah, whose vindicated sovereignty is the central fact in all Israel's expectations? What room is there for a Messianic King alongside of that divine King? The marvel only grows when we consider the divine attributes, titles, functions, associated with the Messiah. For example, take such passages as those discussed as "echoes" of 2 Sam. vii.—Isaiah's throne-names ("Mighty God, Everlasting Father"), Micah's assertion ("His goings forth are from of old, even from everlasting"), or Zechariah's prediction, that "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth": essential deity, pre-existence, universal authority. We cannot take refuge in the view that this is only Jehovah Himself thought of as a human Person, for Jehovah's *relation* to this Person is clearly indicated: Jehovah is the One who will "raise him up," or "set him on his throne," or "bring him forth," or

supply the "strength and majesty" in which he shall rule or the "spirit" by which he shall judge.

Israel's divine King, and yet not Jehovah! *This*, in a nation of monotheists, and most unmistakably from the lips of Israel's most uncompromising monotheists! What does it mean? And why do the two expectations persist side by side from age to age: "He comes," that is, Jehovah comes; and "He comes," that is, Messiah comes?

The only explanation of this riddle lies in a *wholly un-psychological origin* for this figure of the Messiah. In this we can agree with the school of Gressmann over against the criticism dominant until lately. That in which we cannot agree with it is in its positive statement, that this figure was derived from mythical material which found its way into Israel in early days apart from any organic connection with Israel's religion. We may safely assert, in the words of Sellin (who uses spaced type to emphasize them), that "the ancient Orient does not know the eschatological king." At most we may perhaps discern in the "court style" of the scribes at Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, or Egyptian courts a certain analogy with what may have been the "court style" at the court of David and Solomon, of Jeroboam and Hezekiah, and may therefore have contributed elements of form to the language in which this eschatological king is celebrated. This is hypothesis, but it is not in itself improbable. Yet this deals only with form, not with substance. The substance of this Messianic doctrine, we hold with Sellin, runs its roots back into "a tradition older than the revelation at Sinai, which was then, it is true, united most intimately with the fundamentally eschatological thought⁴⁵ that sprang up therefrom and in the main became subordinate thereto, yet which also maintained persistently a certain independence."

From this point, however, we must part company, in a measure, even with Sellin. We do not feel, with him, that "in the moment that we begin to pursue this pre-Mosaic tradition, we are treading on the soil of hypothesis." We believe

⁴⁵ *i.e.*, that Jehovah shall be King "in that day."

that the patriarchal period, as depicted for us in the Book of Genesis, is firm historical ground. In passing from the principles of Wellhausen to those of Gressmann, Old Testament criticism, it seems to us, is just discovering that the elephant which bears up the world must have a tortoise to stand upon—that Amos requires a Moses as a necessary *prius* for his preachment. How long must we still wait, before criticism shall awake to the stupendous discovery that the tortoise too needs something on which to stand? Just as back of Amos stands Moses, so also back of Moses stand the Patriarchs, with whose God Jehovah at Sinai takes pains to identify Himself. For to this family of Semites, immigrants into Canaan from the Mesopotamian lands, God had given a promise, world-wide in its outlook, gracious in its terms, unconditional in its pledge, that in their seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. And, back of Abraham again, we believe that the same tradition of a divine saving purpose dwelt in the line of Shem, in whose tents Jehovah was to dwell, and that it finds its source at the very gate of “paradise lost,” where “the seed of the woman” is promised to “bruise the serpent’s head.” Starting with the weal once possessed, forfeited, yet renewed in prospect at each of those crises when Jehovah made fresh covenant with men of His choice, we see in this chain of tradition how the essence of the eschatological hope (or “comfort,” as Lamech, the father of Noah, first calls it) attaches itself to a human “seed,” until at length it comes to be designated as of “the seed of David according to the flesh,” and from the woman of “Bethlehem-Ephrathah,” travailing in birth-pangs of Him “whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

In Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of Mary “of the house and lineage of David,” monarchy in Israel found at length the actualization of the ideal. In Him the dualism of a divine and human sovereignty over the people of God was resolved into a higher unity. In Him the provisions of the Deuteronomic Law, the brighter hopes of Samuel, the

King-maker,⁴⁶ the promises through Nathan to the House of David, and all the glories predicted of "the Branch" by prophet and psalmist, paradoxical as they seemed when given, found their justification, their interpretation, and, in the strictest sense of that word, their "fulfilment."

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⁴⁶ 1 Sam. xiii. 14.